Uncle Walt

The Poet Philosopher

THE FIDDLER

WALT MASON

They are holding high carousal down at Charlie's grog bazar, and the boys are burning money where the shining bottles are; you may hear their joyous laughter, you may hear them shout and sing, and they're finding life a solace as the noisy hours take wing. But the morning, oh the morning, when the singing rounders wake! When the mouth is like a hen's nest, and the head a mass of ache! Oh the agonies remorseful, and the wailings that ascend! For all men must pay the fiddler when the dance is at an end. There are fellows all around us who are cutting quite a swath, thinking that unless they're stylish they are surely in the broth; and they're buying motor wagons, and they're jaunting off to Rome, with a lot of borrowed money and a mortgage on the home. And some day a beastly panic on the land will spread a pall, and a lot of stylish alecks will be backed against the wall; then you'll hear a lot of pleading—pleading all in vain, my friend; for a man must pay the fiddler when the dance is at an end. Little Cora Jane de Jiggers has her feelings badly miffed, for her mother often tells her that her gait is much too swift. With her swagger girl companions through the streets she likes to roam, and she sees the moving pictures when she ought to be at home; she is flirting with the Johnnies in her harmless, foolish way, and she may invest in sackcloth on some bitter future day; for the laws that govern mortals never yield and never bend—girls, like boys, must pay the fiddler when the dance is at an end.

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Walt Mason